AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-26 (Cancelled)

Claim 27 (Previously Presented): A composition comprising a purified proteolytic hepatitis C virus (HCV) polypeptide wherein said HCV polypeptide comprises an HCV NS3 domain protease or an active HCV NS3 domain protease truncation analog.

Claim 28 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 27 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease or active HCV NS3 domain truncation analog has a partial internal amino acid sequence of SEQ ID No: 63.

Claim 29 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 27 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease or active HCV NS3 domain truncation analog has a partial internal amino acid sequence of SEQ ID No: 64.

Claim 30 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 27 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease or active HCV NS3 domain truncation analog has a partial internal amino acid sequence of SEQ ID No: 65.

Claim 31 (Previously Presented): A composition comprising a purified proteolytic hepatitis C virus (HCV) polypeptide wherein said HCV polypeptide comprises a fusion protein comprising a fusion partner fused to a HCV NS3 domain protease or to an active HCV NS3 domain protease truncation analog.

Claim 32 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 31, wherein said fusion partner comprises human superoxide dismutase.

Claim 33 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 31 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease or active HCV NS3 domain protease truncation analog has a partial internal amino acid sequence comprising SEQ ID No: 63.

Claim 34 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 31 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease or active HCV NS3 domain protease truncation analog has a partial internal amino acid sequence comprising SEQ ID No: 64.

Claim 35 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 31 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease or active HCV NS3 domain protease truncation analog has a partial internal amino acid sequence comprising SEQ ID No: 65.

Claim 36 (Previously Presented): A method for assaying compounds for activity against hepatitis C virus comprising the steps of:

a) providing a purified proteolytic HCV polypeptide according to any one of claims 27-35;

b) contacting said purified proteolytic HCV polypeptide with a candidate inhibitory compound in the presence of said peptide substrate; and

c) measuring the inhibition of the proteolytic activity of said purified proteolytic hepatitis C virus polypeptide.